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THE

HIGHER EDUCATION.

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BY A. B. MUZZEY.

Reprinted from "The Religious Magazine."

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LEONARD C. BOWLES, No. 3 BEACON ST.
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THE HIGHER EDUCATION.

THERE are two methods of learning the true height and breadth of a great principle. One is by a study of it in the abstract, another by embodiment and illustration. Pursuing mentally the latter course, I have often thought of the higher education as foreshown in a college classmate, Edward Bliss Emerson. He bore a name honored in American history, and by a brother of world-wide fame. Had his life been prolonged, he would have given to that name an enhanced and imperishable lustre. I see him to-day, as then, a half-century ago, gifted with rare personal beauty, an eye large and beaming with genius, and a face radiant, not more with a surpassing intellect than a fascinating sweetness. He combined those varied qualities which assure, in its best sense, the higher education; a mind uniting strength and fertile resources, and even then stored with ample reading; a character manly and influential; and a reverence for divine things seldom equaled at his age. I recall an oration of his at one of our "Exhibitions," mature in thought, sparkling with illustration, full of scriptural allusions, and delivered with a grace and power which showed him in the front rank, as of scholarship, so of oratory. Alas that, within the brief space of ten years, the frail body, overmastered by a peerless, but at last clouded intellect, he passed on, and left an irremovable shadow over the class of 1824.

But I turn now, for a few moments, to the abstract view of our subject. We are hearing on all sides the call for an advance upon those aims and methods of instruction in our

various institutions of learning which have marked the past history even of the most cultivated portions of the race. The standard in our schools must be elevated; the college must occupy a higher position in its curriculum; and the university must rise above the college, multiply its departments, and carry each of them up to the broadest and most perfect mental development. "The Higher Education," — that is to be the bugle-note for a grand forward movement of the whole intellectual column.

Sympathizing heartily with this noble summons, one may pause a moment, and ask, What *is* the higher education? What is the very highest education of which a human being is susceptible? Without abating one iota from the claims of the intellect, it cannot be questioned in a broad, philosophic view, however it may be by the sciolist, that the moral nature makes paramount demands on all our institutions and systems of learning. With enlarged conceptions of man, his capacities, his position, and his destiny, we are forced to the conclusion, that the religious element may, under no circumstances, be neglected or disparaged.

But if this be so, it gives a new aspect, in the first place, to the general subject of a true intellectual culture. The mind cannot receive its highest development except when trained with reference to that part of human nature that is higher than itself. It is the function of every institution of learning, so to arrange its studies that they shall all harmonize with the co-ordinate culture of the still higher, that is, the moral nature. And every teacher is bound so to conduct his special department that it shall not overshadow the spiritual capacities.

These remarks open a very large subject, one whose just treatment requires a volume instead of a brief essay. Without entering this wide field, I wish only at present to start from the above position as a postulate. I shall take it for granted, confining the remarks that follow to one class of our educational institutions, the college, that science is not to assume the subordination of religion, nor yet the intellect to be so trained or furnished as to leave the moral character in

a disregard, either real or apparent. Of course we cannot require every teacher of the abstract sciences to introduce formally moral topics into his department. Yet we may reasonably expect that the manuals he recommends, and his own teachings, will never conflict with the demands of the student's higher nature. And we may rationally look, in the school, college, and university, for a constant recognition of the supremacy of the religious nature. An allusion to this nature ought never to be received as an intrusion on the proper studies of the institution. On the contrary, an obvious and studied avoidance of all such allusions may sometimes be construed into a dereliction of duty.

It has been well said that all life is moral; it is eminently true that, in one important sense, all college life is moral, that is, has moral bearings. It involves on the part, both of teacher and student, lecturer and listener, and in the strictest private relations and personal influences, a continuous effect, either for good or evil, upon the character and conduct of those thus brought together. I recollect well, in my college experience, professors and tutors whose whole influence was pure and elevating. And I recall, too, classmates, to associate with whom was a tonic to one's highest nature.

Can we ever forget the devoted and saintly Dr. Popkin? For eighteen years he was connected with Harvard College as instructor and lecturer in the Greek language and literature. He had his peculiarities; and his single life made him somewhat eccentric in his habits and manners. Yet how we all respected and loved him; and how thoroughly conscientious he was! Many anecdotes are told of him. He was once called to preach, with very short notice, in the college chapel. This disturbed him much. "I had not time," said he, in speaking of it, "to gather up my soul." So artless was he, that some students took advantage of him. Being somewhat deaf, a wag in one of the classes, when asked by him one day in history, "Who was the fourth king of France?" answered with a sound that might be construed into a variety of names, but contained in reality none. "I am a little deaf," said the innocent doctor, "but I believe you

are right." When we parted with him finally, at the close of our last recitation in the Junior year, he simply said, "I wish you all well." But those words had to us a world of meaning. So just and impartial had he been, so considerate and kind to every one in the class, that this brief benediction was to us full of soul and sincerity.

I recall, too, at this point, with deep pleasure, the gracious and ever-faithful Farrar. It was said he had spent ten years in the basement under Harvard Hall in experiments on Natural Philosophy. His nerves were evidently somewhat disordered; and this rendered him excitable and quick in expression. But not only did we esteem him the prince of lecturers, we felt assured also that the basis of his character was sound and pure. His refined manners led us to call him "the gentleman;" and he was in the best sense a thoroughly Christian gentleman. Strict, it is true, in discipline, and exact in the required recitation, we still felt that he was our friend. Although severe toward those who attempted any guile in connection with the lesson, or were idle or negligent, he was fair, honorable, and frank towards every one. His intense application impaired his health at one period, and his religious nature, which was uniformly manifest, was then expressed by the "note" which was read before the prayer on the Sunday after his return from a tour in Europe, giving thanks "for his safe return in health." This practice was not then uncommon; I remember a note read at the request of one of the classes on the death of a classmate.

Among the opportunities afforded by college life should be ranked that of intercourse with the families of the officers of instruction and government. In former days the acquaintance between the students and the professors was confined almost entirely to the recitation-room. There was a kind of jealousy created even by a student's stopping after the class for conversation with the instructor. He exposed himself to the odious reputation of "fishing" for favors. So completely were the students excluded from the society of Cambridge, that their manners were often stiff and uncouth. They were trained to be literary cenobites; and it was re-

garded by many outsiders as sufficient cause for exclusion from company that one was "a student." If an individual, after graduation, remained in the Divinity or Law School, he might then venture into society; and it was thought proper, on the part of the college officers, to extend their hospitalities to such as had received a degree. I recollect a classmate who told me, so unaccustomed had he become to society in all his years at college, that, although, while a resident for the study of his profession in the town, he was invited occasionally into company, "it was harder to spend an evening out than to study the hardest lesson."

One of the perils of college life, as it was then conducted, was its tendency to monasticism. Excluded by necessity from female society while pursuing our studies, we spent four years of the most decisively forming period of life in a practically social exclusion. Vacations alone gave an opportunity to meet the opposite sex; and, such was the force of habit, that many of us then, accustomed for the long term to the unrestraint of student companionship, were too diffident to seek general society and submit ourselves to its restrictions and proprieties. At Harvard, less than at some other institutions, less certainly than at Yale, was anything done in the community of the town to counteract this great evil. Invitations to a party or even a social visit were rare exceptions. A lack of the wholesome stimulus to our better nature afforded by a broad association with the world at large, led not a few to seek excitements in the indulgence of the lower appetites, and decoyed some into the snares of intemperance.

The tendency of college life is to become provincial, abnormal, narrow, and unnatural. The student has his peculiar dialect; and, when he goes into society, if he is not awkwardly silent, he betrays his daily habits by using words that in others would be called vulgarisms, such as "screw," "dead set," "miss," "a dig," "a fish," "joke," "grind," &c. College officers are often named by titles and epithets the meaning of which none but the initiated could imagine. Of one thing others would think they were certain, that every profes-

sor, tutor, and assistant was venerable for his age. "Old Pop," "Old Sykes," &c., led one to think of gray hairs and trembling limbs, while some of our instructors had not yet reached the meridian of life.

The present age is absorbed in questions touching the true position and relations of woman. It is not easy to decide some points now up for debate in this connection. But my own recollections of college life lead me to ask whether the dangers of admitting both sexes to all our institutions of learning, whether high or low, can be greater than their monasticism in past days. After an experience of some twenty years on various college committees, and of twelve years as member of various school committees, in which the subject of the separation of the sexes and of mixed schools was fully tested by discussion, and by experiment in both methods, I do not hesitate to say, in this age of experiments it seems to me worth while to try the experiment of admitting both sexes, gradually and with judicious guards and restrictions, to our higher seminaries of learning. I believe the intellect of man, young or middle-aged, would be benefited by the competition, and that the mind of woman would exhibit, under this liberal culture, powers of which we now see only gleams in the narrow sphere where she is usually educated. And for the character, it would be strange indeed if any moral evils came from this course greater than those inseparable from the exclusive system now prevalent. Would conversation be no purer in the daily presence of woman? Would the manners of our young men fail to improve under her subduing and ameliorating influence? Is imagination a less fertile source of pollution than a free, courteous, and constant intercourse between the sexes? If these things are so, then Providence has committed a great error in placing the boy and girl side by side in the family. And then, contrary to that beautiful harmony and consistency which pervades all His other arrangements, He has failed of success in not building with His own hand the monastery and the nunnery at every turn of life's great road.

I anticipate, beside moral remonstrances, the old objec-

tion, "Woman has not the capacity for the severe studies of the college." In my own youth I knew repeated instances of young ladies who actually completed the whole course of college studies, in academies and elsewhere. And at this day we have Antioch and Vassar colleges at least, that have put this question at rest by opening their doors to woman, and with the happiest results. Lombard University, in Illinois, has, for nineteen years, educated sons and daughters together. And the testimony is, that the standard of scholarship has never been lowered by this practice. On the contrary, while young men are incited to greater effort by the presence of ladies, the young women have succeeded in "the most difficult studies of a collegiate course. In logic, the calculus, and the most difficult Greek, their scholarship does not fall below that of the young men."

We live, happily, in an age of increased cofidence in humanity. Without entering on any rash experiment, may we not put sufficient faith in the female character, to give this sex all the opportunities they desire for the most liberal education? Is it not safe to make an appeal to our young men, to those honorable sentiments and generous qualities which mark their period of life? May we not trust something to their higher nature, and bring them, wherever it is practicable, into a free and broad companionship of study? Can we acquit ourselves of all narrowness, and prejudice, and pride of sex, if we determinately and forever exclude them from every university and college we can control? My voice is for the largest liberty — subject to those checks we impose on the other sex — the largest liberty they may desire and can improve in all our institutions of learning. Begin by giving the sexes common lessons together in the Primary School, and continue the system on and up through every grade of instruction, until they are honorable competitors in the university.

I have alluded to the influence of vacations. They may do much for the student, if wisely arranged and well employed. They should not be so long as to enervate the mind, or create a relish for pursuits alien from those of college life.

I remember our winter vacation — seven dreary weeks mid-winter — at a season, too, most fit for study. It was designed to accommodate those who wished to teach school at that time. But these were always a minority; and to the rest of the class, this protracted interruption of study proved a serious loss. Is there not danger, however, in giving nearly the entire summer and early autumn to one continuous vacation? While to some it is acceptable, as affording time for a voyage, or a prolonged journey, many students speak of it as an actual burden. To the majority, while it gives scope for the joys of home intercourse, and may thus do much to purify and strengthen the higher nature, it has attendant evils. Let us give a fair trial to the experiment; and, looking to the good of the students, as well as to the convenience of the instructors, accept the result which time shall justify.

In some of our higher institutions of learning there is a deplorable neglect of the fine arts. Science is now in the ascendency; and this position may be retained, but it should not be so to the exclusion of æsthetic culture. There is a trinity of the true, the good, and the beautiful. By what authority do any of our universities disparage the last in this threefold union? Time was when that took the precedence in an estimate of the branches of good learning. We have now an "Academy of arts and sciences," the arts being placed first. In my college life almost nothing was done to foster an interest in the fine arts. True, the Hon. Theodore Lyman did present to the institution a celebrated Panorama of Athens. But, the college being too poor to erect a building for its preservation, an attempt was made to raise funds elsewhere for that purpose. This effort failing, Prof. Edward Everett gave a lecture in aid of that object. This also was unsuccessful; and, while the work was being still delayed, the Panorama was placed in a small structure which took fire and this valuable work of art was destroyed. Count Rumford left a bequest in this direction to the college about 1815; but it was confined, unhappily, to "the improvement of the useful arts." The culture of a taste for the fine arts was almost an unknown thing during that period at Harvard. We had, it

is true, a "Pierian Society," for the culture of instrumental music; and its performances were highly gratifying. But, if we pass by an uncertain choir in the chapel on Sundays, and the songs of the students, which, in my day, were not "excelsior," either in poetry or musical utterance, the province of art was rarely entered by the mass of students. Whether the charge be true, let the world judge; but, it is said, in the department of architecture, no place has, from age to age, exhibited more flagrant violations of its principles than ours, the highest of the literary institutions of the land.

This should not be; a college ought not to aim at producing gigantic intellects alone; it should produce men, whole men, those developed in the beautiful, no less than the good and the true. Students should be trained in the finer feelings, as well as the stronger traits of mind; they should be educated in everything that encourages a character both strong and refined. Good conversation, correct manners, propriety of deportment, should pervade the lecture room, the dormitory, and the table. These accomplishments may not be left to accident, but belong, indirectly at least, to the care of the officers and teachers of every institution for culture, however high.

It is pleasant to know that Boston is to have an art museum. We trust it will shed its select influences over our beloved Harvard. But why should she not have her own museum of fine arts? We are all indebted to the new President, as in so many other respects, so for tasteful improvements in the once bare and bald college grounds. Let his spirit be seconded by the erection of buildings within those walls constructed on the true principles of architecture. Everything on which the student's eye daily rests should tend to educate him in the love of the beautiful. While the gymnasium trains his body, let not his better nature be neglected. If we encourage the boat and the base-ball club, let us see to it that to physical energy he adds each genuine accomplishment of his higher nature.

We may well consider, meanwhile, that good taste is an ally of virtue. Coarseness has no natural affinity with moral

excellence, but the contrary. In all ages art has received aid from, and found its highest and purest expression in, religion. The cathedral has given us some of our finest works in the realms of architecture and painting. Many of the old masters were as good Christians as they were artists. If science, as I believe, in its legitimate sphere, is the friend of religion, so is art. It is a favorable augury for our college that it has at length appointed an instructor in music; and wisely have the present government placed music among the elective studies. We are glad to hear that this branch is already selected by many students. The success the past winter of the course of lectures on this art by our eminent instructor is a good omen for the future. Music, divorced, as it will thus be, from places and associations of doubtful purity, will discharge its high function as a renovator and sustainer of true moral excellence. The mind will be elevated, and the heart made better by this welcome fellowship.

The omission would be unjustifiable did I not speak of the general reading of the student as a department of the higher education. Some of my class, myself among the number, would acknowledge our indebtedness to personal friends, both among the college instructors and judicious classmates, for important aid in the direction of our reading. But how many are left to chance alone in this matter. They read whatever they can find in the college library, or in those of the various students' societies, that is recommended by its newness. I remember a librarian who once said to me, "I did up all my reading of English books while I was in college." Did this promiscuous and multifarious devourer of books act wisely? Or is it well for the student to seize every novel that appears, for the sake of giving the first opinion upon it? Better wait — mind, heart, and character put in this earnest plea — better wait till each book has stood the test of others, who, like the wine-testers in the cellars of London, make it their vocation to taste and try the quality of each new production. "Read much, but few books," is a maxim as useful in the nineteenth century as it was when first promulgated.

The selection of books and the time to be devoted to them, indeed the whole subject of college reading, is worthy of much thought. Why have we not a professorship for this special work? Is it right to leave so important a matter to mere accident, or to caprice? Shall the student follow instinct alone in his reading? For some it may be safe; there are those who tell us, "the college library was their best educator while at Harvard." And we owe to this habit of self-chosen reading, occasionally a splendid result, like those of Greenwood, the accomplished preacher of King's Chapel, and Emerson, who thought more, it is said, of the library than the recitation or lecture room. The genius of a Walter Scott will master whole shelves of books, and feed luxuriously, and grow rich and wise by this omnivorous subsistence. But for us ordinary mortals it is a practice full of peril. It becomes the college student to seek out some Philip, who, when, with friendly voice, he shall ask, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" can hear the modest reply, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"